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ABSTRACT

The history and culture of the Blackfeet people are reflected in the 10 tales that comprise this volume. Because George Comes At Night already has had considerable experience as a writer, little editing was needed for the book and the stories are almost entirely in the words of the 61-year old author. He states that he has written the stories as they were told to him and that the main events really happened and that the main characters actually existed. A number of the stories are concerned with visionary and magical experiences that were accepted as real and so exerted powerful influences on the lives of the individuals directly involved as well as on those lives of other tribal members. In several of these tales warriors are assisted by their "secret helpers," animals that have come to them in a vision and pledged to help them in all they do. In "Mia-Wa, The Hard Luck Warrior," a man offends his secret helper and so had many years of hard luck. Not until he fasts for four days does he receive another secret helper and become successful in what he undertakes. In "Mik-ka-pi, Red Old Man Adventure," a badly wounded warrior is carried on the back of his secret helper, a bear, to his people's encampment. Other stories are tales of warfare: "The Last Great Battle of Eagle Head" tells of a raid made by the author's grandfather on an enemy camp. Three of the stories are short vignettes about teaching bravery to young boys, constructing a sweat lodge, and feasting after a buffalo hunt. (DS)

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George Comes At Night

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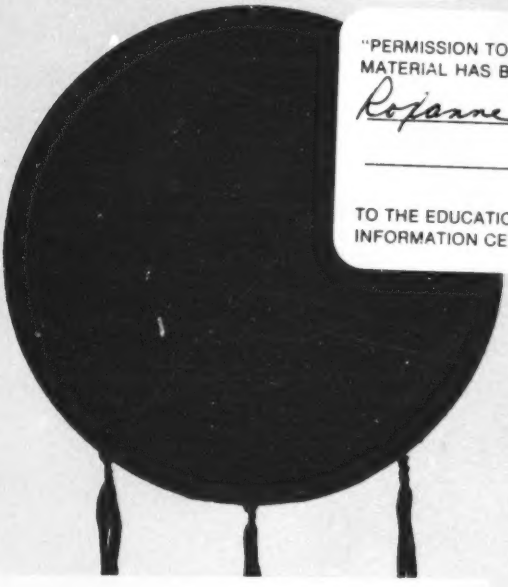

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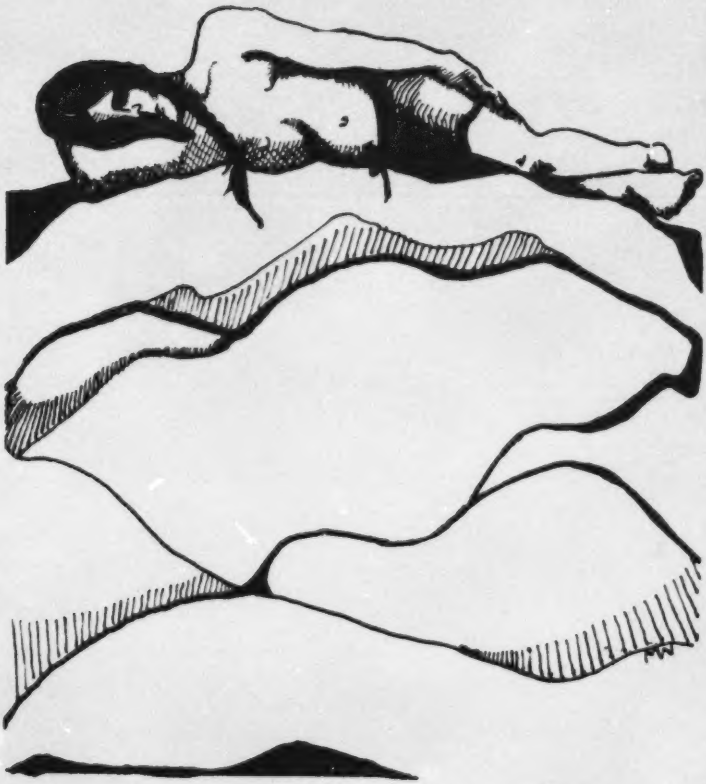

ROAMING DAYS

By

George Comes At Night

Edited by Jane Bailey

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Blackfeet Heritage Program: Browning

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Roaming Days

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Seven Persons-Star Map

The startoff of these old-days stories was a sad memory, as I listened to them tell it, of their free roaming days, not long ago.

George Comes At Night
Si-pioo-ta

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MIA-WA, THE HARD LUCK WARRIOR

Around 1900, Comes At Night and Yellow Fish, his good friend, were hunting in the St. Mary's area for big horn sheep. One day they went north of the lower St. Mary's Lake to where Chief Mountain stood, and climbed it. There were two skulls up on Chief Mountain. They knew that one of those skulls was brought up there by Eagle Head, a renowned warrior of the early days, but the other one, they didn't know who had brought that one up, so they sought to find some old timers. Warriors went up to Chief Mountain to fast, to pray for visions as they slept, and brought skulls up there for pillows. That much they knew. So they got Lone Charger to tell them the story of Mia-Wa, the hard luck warrior, the one who had brought the unknown skull.

Mia-Wa was one man who had endured much bad luck for many winters. Then because of the vision he obtained upon Chief Mountain with a buffalo skull he carried up there for a pillow, he had great success in all his undertakings thereafter. Mia-Wa, in his old age, loved to tell of his many terrible experiences, how he had failed in everything that he attempted to do and how at last he obtained the power to overcome his bad luck. A number of us were gathered at Mountain Chief's lodge. He had just returned from an unsuccessful raid and was telling of their bad luck. Mia-Wa told Mountain Chief, "Your bad luck doesn't compare with the continuous failures of my undertakings."

This is the story he told Mountain Chief.

At last, one day in the summer, Mia-Wa said to his wives, "Make two pairs of moccasins for me, plain ones. Put an awl in with them, sinew thread, sacred paint, some pemmican meat and put them in my war bag. I am going to try my luck to take Sioux scalps and horses."

His sits-beside-him-wife [1], told him, "Do you know you are leaving us with barely enough meat for two days? Before you take off for war, you bring in some fat buffalo meat so we can cut up some to dry for later use."

Mia-Wa told her, "Your brothers will keep you in supply while I'm gone. Do not worry." And he started out. The Pikuni [2] (Blackfeet) were camped where the Marias River joins the Missouri, so he started out on the plains and traveled

eastward, on top, along the Missouri. Old Night Light (the moon) came up big and round. The Seven Stars (the dipper) were up, turning in the clear Northern sky, showing the coming of morning and passing of night. One did not pray to them, as they were different from the Sun and other Above Ones, but they were helpful when not cloud hidden. By the position there were in, a person could tell whether morning was near at hand.

Going on raids to other tribes' areas is one long walk. Mia-Wa thought, 'I have been on some raids against the Crows, the Sioux and other enemies but I have never even taken a horse or scalp or enemy gun. Our warriors have no trust in me; they shun me. On this, my one lone journey, I will may a successful raid on the enemy or die trying.' Going on raids is night travel, during the coming day, you hid in the brush or jack pines, then come dark, you start out again.

Toward daylight, Mia-Wa dropped down into the bottom brush along the Missouri River to hide. He drank thirstily of its muddy water, went into the brush and ate some of his pemmican. Just then some deer came to the shore to drink. Should he shoot one? He was afraid, but he took a risk. The enemy might not be far off, but he killed a yearling doe and built a little fire. He cooked some meat, ate some, and broiled some to last several days. He looked around, crawled back into the brush and slept till night came on. Then he got up and started his long hike on the plain, traveling eastward. Seven Stars (the dipper) gave him to know it was midnight. From where the Missouri River turns south, he traveled due northeast to the Bear Paws, not far off. He arrived there about daybreak and climbed the steep slope up into a grove of pine for his day's rest. Out on the plain he could see buffalo and antelope grazing. He ate some of his broiled meat, lay down and went to sleep.

Just then he woke up, hearing loud singing. He sat up. There was a spring in a little coulee going down from where he sat, about two hundred yards below him. He was hidden from it in the pines. A war party of many men was at the spring, with many horses. Some had eagle tail feathers tied behind their heads, indicating they were Sioux. Maybe they stole the horses from the Pikuni, his own tribe. They rode northeastwards along the Bear Paws that night and the following night Mia-Wa traveled south and east to Middle Creek (Cow Creek on the map). The second night he went up into the Little

Rockies. Three mornings later he had traveled around the Little Rockies and was on top of Hairy Cap, on the east end.

On its north side Mia-Wa found rocks piled up waist high for shelter. Within that circle he filled his pipe to smoke. After the smoke he lay down to sleep, but a loud noise of ravens flying around above him woke him up. He got his gun and sat up, just as three white tail deer came leaping up over the east end of the butte. They ran close and went on over the north end of the butte. He wanted to shoot one but he thought, 'Something scared those deer and they are really moving.' So he grabbed his gun and crawled to the east rim of the butte, where the deer had popped up. He peeked down. Saw some men plainly. They were coming up the slope, one tall guy in the lead looking down to the plains. A feather tied on behind his head indicated Sioux. Mia-Wa crawled back a little ways, got up and sped to the west slope as fast as he could run. Then he made for the south end of the butte, the heavily timbered end, and hid in it.

Looking down on the plain south of Hairy Cap, Mia-Wa could see the Missouri breaks about twelve miles off. He could see buffalo bunch up and run toward the breaks. Not far from the buffalo run he saw thirty or more riders going east and at dusk he started for the Missouri breaks.

He went along the north side of the river and three mornings later he was looking down into their camp in a big open bottom with cherry bushes on the ridge going down to the river. On the west side of camp he could see band after band of horses. The best horses were tied at night in front of the owners' lodges. Most of them were stolen.

About midnight is when all fires are out in any big camp, but Mia-Wa waited for a while longer. He'd gotten to the west side of the camp, down along the cherry bushes, when, of all the luck, he stepped down on two lovers. The woman screamed. The man jumped up. So Mia-Wa took a shot at him and beat it to the creek. He didn't know if he'd hit the man but the two ran shouting and really aroused the camp. Men were coming from the lodges, going for the timber, so Mia-Wa made a beeline for the river, made it, and waded in along the shore. Going down it he just about got to Little River (the Milk River), flowing from the north into the Big Water (the Missouri). Darn if he did not step into a water hole, a deep spot, and went in and under. The swift water coming in from Little River pushed him out. Gun in one hand, he tried to

swim, but no luck. He needed both hands. As he was sinking, he had to let go of his gun or else drown. He swam to shore below the mouth of Little River. Indians were swarming in the timber, yelling to one another, west of him, and he really had failed again. Going against the enemy, losing his gun in deep water at night and now having only his knife, with many nights travel to get home to his people.

After he wrung out his clothes and moccasins and put them back on, Mia-Wa started up Little River. Not far from the Sioux camp, when light was coming on, he climbed half way up the north slope of the Little River valley and made his way into some cherry bushes. He opened his war sack for pemmican and there was enough to last for three or four days. Bad luck had been his and would, for how long, he didn't know. He slept a little.

When the sun came up, with a clear sky and warm air, Mia-Wa heard people talking and sat up. Looking down into the valley below him, he saw that many riders were coming up along it, a hunting party with women and travois horse behind them. But he was well hidden in brush, looking down at them. They passed up around the bend and out of sight. He was lying on his side thinking and wondering when he heard shots around the bend, west of him, 'Must be plenty of buffalo dead, I hear many shots.' So he thought to himself, 'I should go now. If I wait till dusk, it will be hard to find their kills. If I go down and travel along the brush by the creek, I'll see them butchering!' He ran down the valley. In a big opening around the bend in the river, where buffalo bedded down for the night, he saw men and women loading meat on horses and travois. Hides too. They finished, got together and went down the valley out of sight. So Mia-Wa slept, under cover, until late evening.

At dusk he went out to the remains of the enemy's kill, and many buffalo they had killed. He got a lot of meat off the heads that the enemy did not take, really nice meat. The home journey was a long walk. Not far from the kills, Mia-Wa built a little fire and cooked meat. He cut thin pieces, dried them near the fire and put them in his war sack. It took him about ten nights to get home to the big camp lodges.

On a warm morning he walked into camp and went to his lodge. "Huh!" his two wives told him, "You've returned from a war raid and you have no gun, no horses, no scalps."

"I have cut meat the Sioux provided me," he said.

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His wife told him, "So you've become friends with our enemy."

He never answered or said a word to her. Not long after, his brothers-in-law came in to hear news of his long journey and why he had no luck. So Mia-Wa told all that happened after he located the enemy's big camp where Little River flows into the Missouri, told of hitting a water hole and trying to swim with one hand, holding his gun with the other. Starting to sink and having to drop the gun in deep water or drown. They had great pity for him, for his bad luck.

A few days later he got himself a horse, borrowed a gun from the great medicine man, Talks With The Buffalo, rode out alone and killed himself an antelope. He brought home meat.

His wives said to each other, "Poor you and me, never will he be a good warrior." But they cooked him meat. After he got through eating, he took a nap and late in the afternoon he took the gun to Talks With The Buffalo.

Mia-Wa told him of the bad luck, of his long journey and failure to come home with horses or scalps.

Talks With The Buffalo said to him, "Tell me where you did wrong to your sacred helper. That I must know in order to help you."

So Mia-Wa told him of the animal that came to him in his vision, to help him in whatever he did. Just once he had failed to fullfill his promise. He had forgotten a certain sacrifice to the Above Ones and a dog had eaten it. From there on, his good luck had turned to bad, in all his goings and comings.

Talks With The Buffalo said to him, "You should have told me of your misgivings long ago. As I see it, now you will have to try and obtain a new sacred, powerful helper. I, in my youthful days, had to go for a sacred fast to obtain a sacred helper, a water animal. It was on Feather Woman Mountain. In my sleep, the vision of a sacred helper came to me and I have never failed to make the sacrifices."

Talks With The Buffalo was a very powerful sacred man, a sacred pipe man, and he told Mia-Wa, "I know of a place on top of Chief Mountain, Almost Sacred Mountain, and I know that Eagle Head, a most powerful warrior, obtained his vision there.

Mia-Wa told him, "I do not like to go far from my people to fast."

Talks With The Buffalo told him, "I will talk with the

chiefs, Big Lake and others, about moving to Inside Lakes." (St. Mary's Lakes) The chiefs granted his request to move, so in a few days they made camp at St. Mary's Lakes, not far from Chief Mountain. Mia-Wa made a sweat lodge and he and Talks With The Buffalo had a steam sweat. Talks With The Buffalo prayed for him to the Above Ones, and even to his own sacred helper, to pity Mia-Wa and let him obtain a vision during his sacred fast. He loaned his gun to Mia-Wa as a safeguard while he slept on top of Chief Mountain.

The next morning when the horses were brought in, they caught four and Mia-Wa, his two women, and Talks With The Buffalo started out for Chief Mountain. Mia-Wa took one buffalo head about three winters old up with him to use for a pillow. They arrived about noon and rode up the west side of the mountain, dismounted and climbed the short, steep slope of it to the top. The women brought two blankets and a buffalo robe for bedding. They went down to get some pine branches to make a good bed for him and placed the buffalo head at the west end. Talks With The Buffalo knelt down and prayed for him to the Above Ones and to Earth Maker. Again he asked help from his sacred helper for Mia-Wa. Then they left him, got on the horses and went back to camp.

Chief Mountain is high. A person can look a long ways down on the great plain and see the Sweet Grass Hills and our Bear Paw Mountains. Mia-Wa started praying to the Above Ones, the Sun and the Night Light (moon) for a success vision and a secret helper. In these fasts a person could not drink water or eat for four days and nights. On the fourth night, if he did not obtain a vision, it was all off for him. No more fasting then, because that's the limit, four days and nights. If you have no luck, go home and try again, some other place. Hah!

On the fourth night he obtained a vision and a sacred helper, a water animal, an Otter. This animal said he would help in all Mia-Wa's undertakings. In return Mia-Wa should do certain things in the way of prayer and sacrifice. He told this animal whose wake he was in (the Otter was out in front of him) that he would do all he could by prayer and sacrifice. Waking up near morning, he was really weak from thirst and hunger, but how happy he was to get a sacred helper again after all!

That morning, after the fourth night, Talks With The Buffalo and Mia-Wa's women came after him. He told them of his powerful vision and that a certain water animal was to be

his helper. They had to halt carry him down to the horses. At camp, water and food made him feel like an altogether different person.

Three Bears, a great leader and warrior, was to go on a war raid to the Crows and got Mia-Wa to go with him, along with a party of twenty-five. Many nights they traveled, rafted across the Missouri, crossed Wolf Creek and Arrow Creek, waded Yellow River (the Judith), crossed the Mussellshell and Elk River (the Yellowstone) and went up the Big Horn River. They were now in Crow territory. The second night, up at the end of the Big Horn, they ran into a war party of twenty; they killed most right there. One tall heavy Crow make a bee-line for the river. Mia-Wa went after him. The Crow dropped his gun and jumped in the river. Mia-Wa caught him and stabbed him, cut his scalp and took his gun. There after, Mia-Wa killed fifteen enemies and took more than a hundred horses. The last six raids, he was a leader of war parties. His people, the Pikuni, were happy because he was a great warrior, a sacred man, and also a camp crier in his old days, so thank you for listening.

TEACHING BRAVERY

Men would make speeches to boys in camp, telling them what to do to make a success of life, giving them a few points. To succeed, they must be brave and untiring in war. Long life was not good. A person got old and it was hard for him. Often he didn't get much care. In winter time, if the band was moving camp to a new location, he would suffer from cold. His sight would be dim. So why suffer and be in misery? It was better, while sight was clear and hair was still black and long, to die in battle bravely.

MIK-KA-PI, RED OLD MAN ADVENTURE

The Pikuni, or Peigan-Blackfeet, were camped on the west end of Armells Creek, east of Black Mountain. One day Mik-ka-pi went to war. He was a renowned warrior and medicine man, who took his fast on Half Dome Mountain, on the north side of Big Badger Creek Canyon, on the west end of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. He accumulated his powers from a sacred helper, the Grizzly Bear, which appeared to him in his sleep, in a vision, and counciled with him.

"To be a successful warrior in your coming undertakings, to survive bullets and arrows, you will have to travel alone, like me. In my wanderings, I am alone. So, to you, in enemy country." So Mik-ka-pi traveled alone on war raids and was always successful.

One morning early, a band of buffalo was not far from the camp. Men got their fast horses to make a run of them. They killed a lot of buffalo, then the horses that were used for travois pulling were brought in to camp. Women folks got their gentle horses, saddled them up, hooked their travois onto them and went out to haul in the meat. The men folks did the skinning. There was plenty of meat in the camp to last for a while and hides to dry and tan. One morning Gray Bird and his two pals, Yellow Mink and Charging Eagle, went on up the river a little ways, left the creeks of it, and rode out for the Mussellshell River. Late that evening they found a place to camp for the night. Each one had a blanket along with him for cover. They tied their horses below them. The next morning early they got up and started towards their horses. About half way, Gray Bird stopped and told them, "My knife is gone, it must have slipped out where we slept. Wait for me while I go look." So he went back. Just then a party of war raiders, Snakes (Bannocks), coming from the west happened to drop in there, where the men had slept. So Gray Bird's friends, who were waiting for him, saw him coming on a full run. Many shots popped loose from the Snakes. He, Gray Bird, got hit; down he went, and lay motionless. His two friends made a bee line for their horses, roped and bridled them, got his horse too and led him full speed down the Musselshell River.

A ways down, they stopped and Charging Eagle told Yellow Mink, "They are a war party, on foot. We are out of

danger, but we must travel for home to our camps." When they got back to camp they told of what happened to Gray Bird, that he went back to where they slept in the brush to get his knife and a war party of Snakes shot him dead.

Gray Bird had two wives. Their father and mother and all their relations were dead. Gray Bird's people were all gone too, over the great beyond to the Sand Hills. So the widows of Gray Bird were very sad of their meat getter. There was no one left to avenge them. Late evenings and early mornings, the widows would mourn for their husband. Sometimes they would sit on a near hill to cry of their great loss. That's where Mik-ka-pi, Red Old Man, came in. He was often awakened in the morning by the crying of these poor widows and during the day he felt pity for them. So one evening he sent his mother to them, to ask them to his camp, and tell them that he wished to talk to them. So they came over to listen to him. They entered and sat close by the doorway, covering their heads.

He told them, "For many days and nights I have heard you mourning. I have a great pity for you; it makes my heart sad. Your husband was a great friend of mine and it hurts me to know he is gone. He was a good warrior. He being my friend, I will avenge him. I will make a sweat lodge for Eagle Plume, a medicine man and owner of the Elk Pipe Bundle, a great warrior in his young days. A sacred, a holy one. I will get him to pray for me to the Above Ones for success; then I will go on a raid to the Snake people, who killed your husband, to ease your hearts. I will go against them to get a scalp or two, or more, and when I return, any scalps I get shall be yours."

When people heard that Mik-ka-pi was going to war, some warriors wanted to join him. But he refused them, telling them his sacred helper forebade him to take any one on a war raid with him.

In order to succeed in his adventure and raid, he built a sweat lodge for Eagle Plume and they perspired in it. The women heated rocks red. They dug a little pit in the middle of the sweat lodge, crawled inside, threw their blankets out and sat naked. The women pushed the heated rocks in to them. Eagle Plume pushed them into the little pit, got his Buffalo Tail, dipped it in a bowl of water he had by him, and sprayed the red hot rocks. Steam filled the lodge. Eagle Plume sang the holy songs of his Elk Pipe Bundle and prayed to the Above Ones, the Sun and the Night Light (moon), and to his secret helper, for Mik-ka-pi to have good luck in his coming raids.

They got done with their sweat lodge and reached out for their blankets. Covered up and ran for the creek to jump into cold water. Washed off, went to their camp and put their clothes on.

That evening Mik-ka-pi started from camp after sunset. He traveled six nights to get to the Snake country, at the north end of Wyoming, south west from Blackfeet country. He knew from other raids to the Crows and Assinniboine-Sioux, that a lone raider has to be alert and cautious, and be on the watch at all times. He had to travel, not during the day, but at night, and to keep in line with the Seven Persons (the dipper or seven stars). About midnight they face east and west. Mik-ka-pi was brave, cautious, and also had a strong medicine. Some say he was related to the Ghost Spirits and that they helped him when he was really in need. They guided him away if the enemy was close at hand. Now he had started to war against the Snakes.

When Mik-ka-pi had come up the Yellowstone River to its starting point, a heavy rain set in. Seeing a hole in the rocks on the south side of the river, he crawled in it and laid down to sleep in the far end. It really rained, all day. When night came, he could not travel. It was too dark and the storm was still on, with no let up. He sat up till midnight, then laid down to sleep again. The next evening all was clear. He took a piece of dry meat and some back fat from his war bag, ate and went to the river to drink water. Then he started again for the Snake country and traveled till day break.

Again he crawled into the brush to sleep. Toward morning, he dreamed he was fighting with a Snake. They were both down on the ground, the Snake's knife out, ready to cut his throat. Mik-ka-pi beat him to a quick thrust, into the Snake's heart. He woke up quickly, rolling onto his stomach. Wiped his eyes and thought, 'A bad dream, and on the sixth night in Snake Country. It's warning, this dream, to turn back.' But he thought of his promise to the widows.

That night he came to a river timbered with brush, aspen trees and cottonwood. He sat down on a slope and saw lodges, said, "Ah, Snake camps."

Along the river and out a ways from it, in the early night, he laid down flat on his belly, watching. A person walked towards him. Mik-ka-pi could line him out good. The man stopped a little ways off, then started down the slope, but did not see him. Mik-ka-pi made a flying tackle at him, hit him so hard and fast that they tumbled down the slope, with

Mik-ka-pi on top. He grabbed the Snake around the neck with an arm over his mouth. Pulled the knife out quick and stabbed him in the breast again and again. The Snake died without a cry. He cut the scalp off, put it in a little sack and into his war bag.

Mik-ka-pi went down the hill and was lost in darkness. He had one scalp. How glad he was! He said, "Ha! Just one more scalp. I must get it. Then I will start homeward to my country." So he stayed that night again, close to the big camp of lodges. Once more the [illegible]n went to his lodge behind the mountains. As night came on, Mik-ka-pi went near the camps and crawled slowly around the outer edge. He heard a cough, saw a movement near the brush, and right there, just a little ways from him, was a Snake. Maybe a chief. So he lay flat, motionless, hardly breathing. The Night Light rose and moved slowly in the sky. The Seven Persons pointed eastward. Just then the man, half down on his haunches, stood up and started walking towards Mik-ka-pi, who was in the weeds, lying motionless. The Snake stumbled over him. At the same time, Mik-ka-pi spun over and was on top of him with his knife out and stabbed him once, full force into the chest. But the Snake made one loud yell.

Mik-ka-pi cut and tore the scalp from his fallen enemy and started to run toward the river. Warriors ran from the lodges toward him. They could see him. Arrows came about him; one hit and pierced his arm. He pulled that out. Another struck his leg and down he went. He jerked it out, got on his feet and started to run again. Back in his own country, Mik-ka-pi was the fastest foot racer; he beat all comers. Now he raced for the river and came to a high rock wall. An enemy was behind him, coming in too close.

He heard a Spirit whisper, "Spread your blanket out and jump. Spread your arms out like the wings of an eagle." It must have been one of his Ghost Spirits. Mik-ka-pi sailed down into the river, into deep water and sank under it. The river is swift. When at last he rose, he was far below his pursuers. Then he felt pain from where he'd jerked the arrows out and he came out of the river. Limping along the shoreline, he saw a dry pine log. Told himself, 'I will roll it into the stream, get on it, float down the river and get far from the enemy.' He rode the log far down the creek all night.

When morning came, he crawled out to shore, went up the bank into some nearby cherry bushes and fell asleep. It

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was late afternoon when he woke up. Mik-ka-pi tried to walk but the pains were so great, he gave up and could go no further. He sat down in a shade place and started praying. He thought about his father and mother, so he started praying to the Sun to have pity on him. Mik-ka-pi asked help from the Above Medicine Person, also his secret helper and the Sun, to look down on their wounded son, their suffering child, for them to help him survive. His leg was swollen and sore. He could hardly use his wounded arm. He was down and under.

Just then he heard a noise in the brush. He was thinking, 'Could that be a Snake?' he went for his bow and arrows but he was too weak to use them. Out came a Bear, a Grizzly.

Mik-ka-pi flung his bow and arrows away, held his arms out and cried, "My sacred helper!" The Bear came up to him, licked his face.

Mik-ka-pi told him, "Look at my leg, my wounded arm. I am a long ways from home and my people. So I must die here, I can't travel and have no food."

"Have courage brother," said Bear, "I will help you, for you will survive."

Bear laid down on his belly and told Mik-ka-pi to get on his back, to hold tight on his hair. The Bear got up with him and carried him to a place of thick mud. Mik-ka-pi got off and laid down. The Bear got mud and plastered, rubbed, smeared it over the wounds to soothe his pain. Bear went in the bushes where many sarvis berries were, broke off branches of the fruit and gave them to him to eat; broke more branches and Mik-ka-pi picked berries off and put them in his war bag.

Bear told him again, "Get on my back and we will travel." They started on the way home. The Bear was a real pacer and made time, too. All night Bear traveled. Morning came and he would stop in the brush. Mik-ka-pi would get off and Bear would plaster his wounds with mud again. They rested awhile, ate some of his berries. On the fourth day they got to the lodges of the Pikuni. People saw them coming.

Bear told his brother, "Get off, you are home. There are your people; I must leave you."

Mik-ka-pi hugged and patted him. "Brother, you saved me. You are my true sacred helper."

His relations went through camp shouting and singing. They held the scalp dance. First came the widows, then the medicine man, their pipes unwrapped. Then the Ravens,

dressed in their costumes. They all sang the war song and danced. Mik-ka-pi sat outside his lodge and people danced by him. Although he could not dance, he sang with them. The chief gave his two young daughters to Mik-ka-pi to marry. He was lucky, two sisters to make good wives for him. To the two widows, Mik-ka-pi gave the two scalps.

THE SWEAT LODGE

The sweat lodge was an important helper in religious ceremonies and was useful for curing all kinds of sicknesses. War parties going on raids often used it. The lodge was built in a half dome shape with a frame of willow branches, three or four feet high in the center and around eight feet wide. A small hole dug in the center held the rocks, which were heated in a fire outside the lodge until they were red hot. The willow frame was covered with skins and robes all the way down to the ground, not to let the outside air in. They dipped a buffalo tail in a bowl of water and sprayed the hot rocks. If the heat became too intense from the steam, the covering was raised for a few minutes to let in some air. The sweat bath lasted an hour or so, during which time many prayers and songs were offered. A pipe or two was smoked to the Sun and the Above Ones. The small lodge was built away from camp, near a creek. A swim in the cold creek ended the sweat.

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FEAST AFTER HUNTING

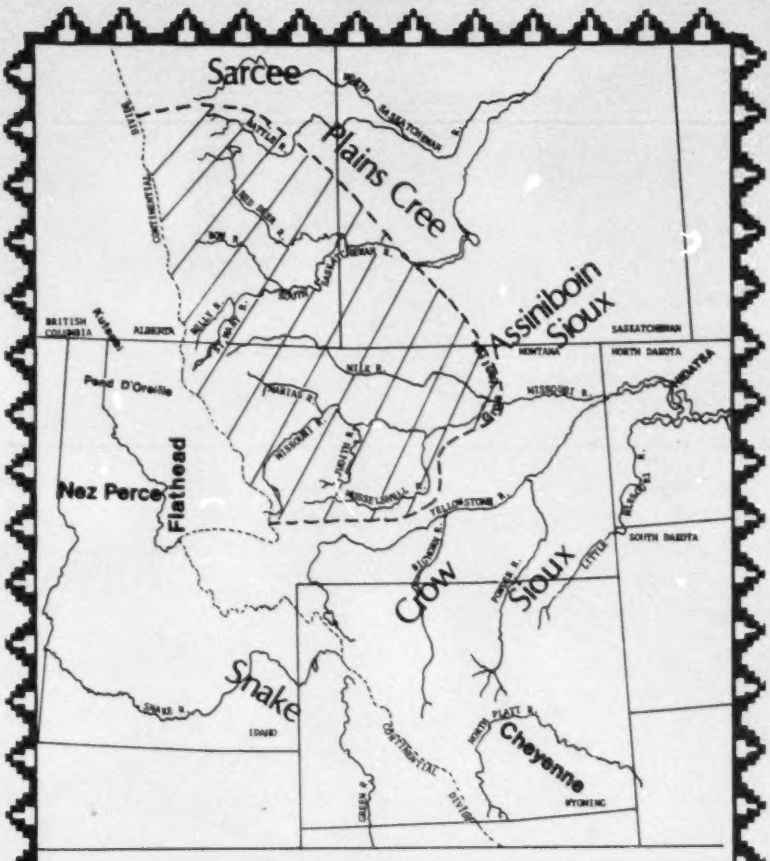
The morning after a hunt and buffalo chase, a feast would be held here and there. The first man who gave one had his wives cook the choicest food they had. When all was ready, the camp crier would bellow out the man's invitation and call each one's name about three times, saying he was invited to this man's camp to eat. Two or three who own pipes should be included in the bunch.

The host did not eat with the guests. He attended to the cutting of tobacco and mixed it with fine plant leaves picked from the ground. The squaw men (white men married to full-blood Indian women), they called this plant T-herbe. We call it in Blackfeet, kokacin. (In English, kinnikinnick.)

The meal came in. With the first plate each one had, he followed the sun priest's actions. He, while praying, held up the dish to the east where the Sun rises, followed the Sun's travel slowly, while praying and finished with the plate pointing to where the Sun sets. Then everyone ate.

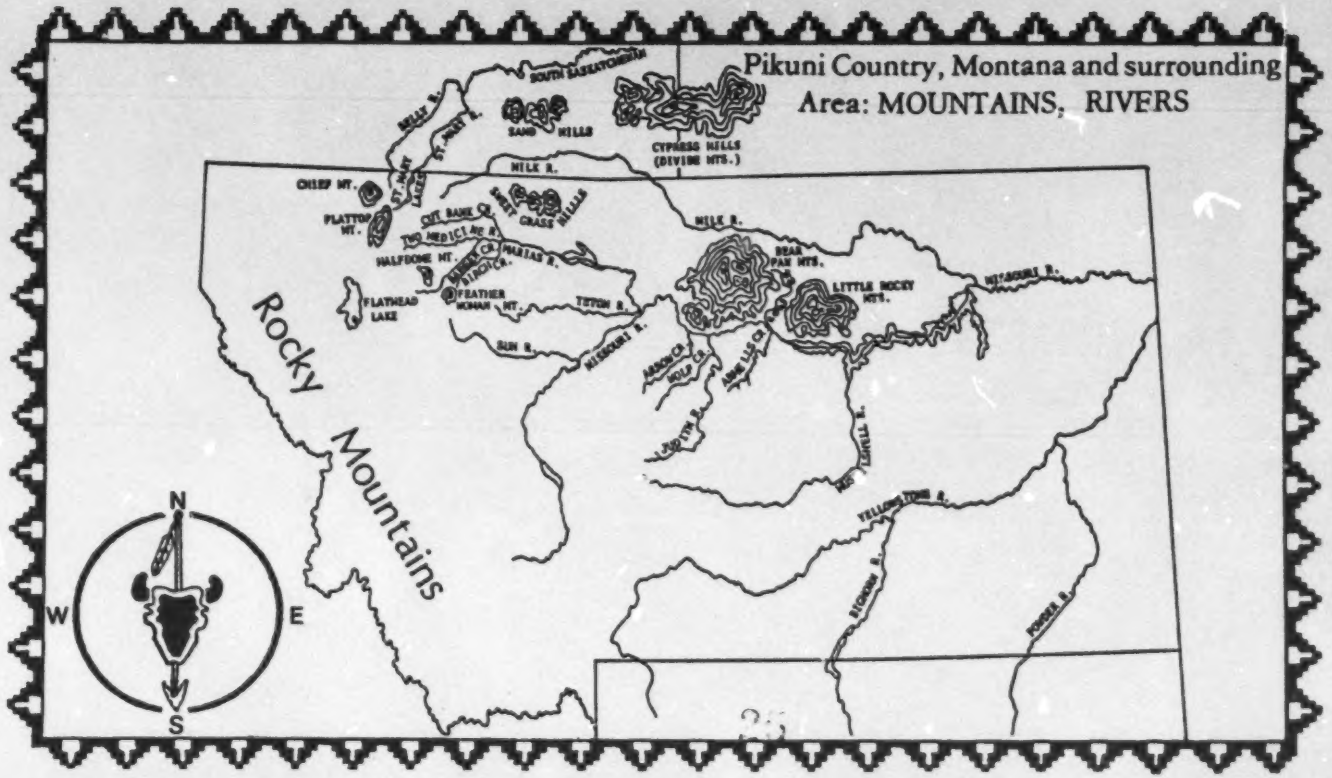
After that the host filled a pipe with tobacco mixed with T-herbe and gave it to the sun priest. Lit it for him. The sun priest took one whiff, blew smoke slow to where the Sun comes up, said a few lines of prayer to the Sun and Above Ones and drew another whiff. Blew smoke slow to where the Sun sets. A few prayers again, then he gave it to the one on his left side. Each took a few puffs, till the last one. Then some one told a story. Everyone listened, it could be of adventures: war raids and hunting. The second pipe would proceed like the first one. The third pipe the same. After all were finished, the host knocked out the ashes and said, "Kinniyai." (That's all.) The guests rose and left.

The next chief gave a feast. All went through the same motions. There might be three feasts in a day after a big buffalo chase and kill.



Tribal Hunting Territories, around 1850

Blackfeet hunting territory (approximate).


Pikuni Country, Montana and surrounding
Area: MOUNTAINS, RIVERS
SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN
BELLY R.
ST. MARY R.
SAND HILLS
CYPRESS HILLS
(DIVIDE MTS.)
MILK R.
CHIEF MT.
ST. MARY LAKE
PLATTER MT.
CUT BANK
MILK R.
TWO MEDICINE R.
BEAR PAW MTS.
HALFDOME MT.
BADGER CR.
MARIAS R.
LITTLE ROCKY MTS.
MISSOURI R.
FLATHEAD LAKE
FEATHER WOMAN MT.
TETON R.
SUN R.
MISSOURI R.
ARROW CR.
WOLF CR.
JUDITH R.
YELLOWSTONE R.
STILLWATER R.
POWDER R.
Rocky Mountains
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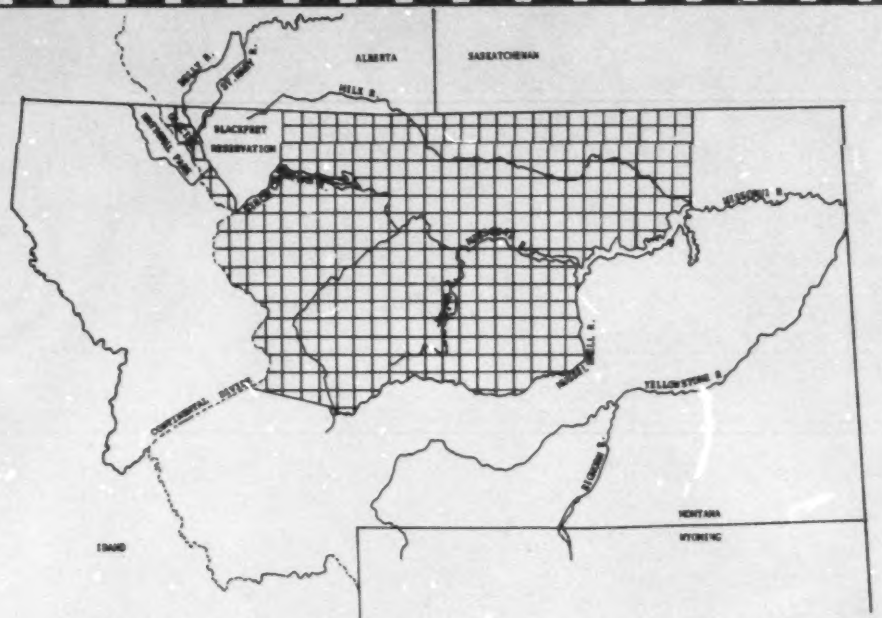
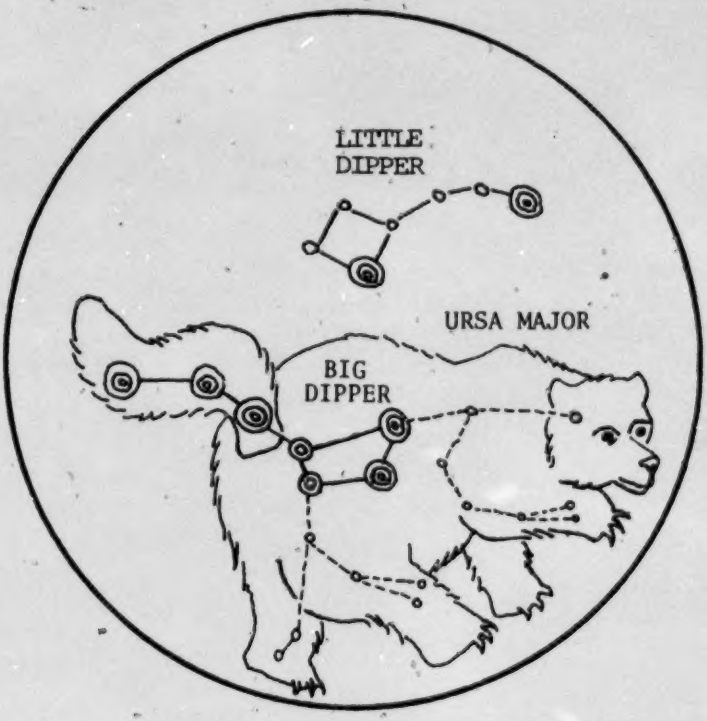


Hunting Territory assigned by Stevens Treaty of 1855, in relation to present Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

Seven Persons



The constellation the Blackfeet call Seven Persons, also called the Big Dipper, is part of the larger constellation Ursa Major (Big Bear). Apparently Ursa Major was named before the bear lost its long tail.

THE LAST GREAT BATTLE OF EAGLE HEAD
As told to his grandson, George Comes At Night

The time had come for Eagle Head to embark on a career as a medicine man and a warrior. In order to achieve this he had to fast to get a sleep vision, to obtain a sacred helper. He wanted to be a real man, a warrior, to be a member of the Doves or Raven Carriers or All Friends Society. Eagle Head decided to have his fasting place be on top of Chief Mountain.

He said to his mother, "I want to take my fast. As of now I am unable to take part in dances, war parties and the happy feast gatherings of the Doves or Raven Carriers."

His mother told him, "My dear son, if you should suceed in your fast for a secret helper, how proud I would be to see you returning with a war party, waving enemy scalps, singing the victory song, riding and driving enemy horses before you." His sister wanted him to join the Siezers, who wore the best clothes, were the best singers and were good dancers. But his mother wanted him to join the Raven Carriers, who were always successful in their undertakings. He asked his mother which medicine man or sun priest he should get to pray for his safety in his lone vision sleep on Chief Mountain. His mother, Mink Woman, told him to get Black Otter, owner of the sacred thunder pipe bundle.

So Eagle Head went out, brought his horses in, and roped one top buffalo horse, a real fast brown horse. He led it to Black Otter's lodge, gave him the horse and said, "Haiya, oh, powerful, Sun-favored thunder pipe man. I am to undergo a lone fast. Help me. Pray for me."

Black Otter asked him, "Where are you going to make your feast?"

Eagle Head told him, "On top of Chief Mountain."

Black Otter said, "It is a holy mountain. You will not fail in your sleep on it, to obtain a sacred helper."

Eagle Head helped his mother and sister build a sweat lodge for Black Otter. The two men crawled in, threw their blankets out and sat naked. They had an old lodge skin over it. In its center, a small pit was dug. Nearby, the women folks had a fire going and were heating the rocks. Black Otter had his

sacred pipe, a wooden bowl with water and a buffalo tail. When the rocks got red hot, the women pushed them in and Eagle Head rolled them into the pit with his stick. The old man dipped his buffalo tail into the bowl by him and sprinkled water over the rocks; steam began to fill the lodge. He prayed to the Above Ones, to the Sun, the Night Light (moon) and to his own sacred helper to aid Eagle Head in his coming raids and undertakings. Then he sang some of his thunder pipe songs. Eagle Head also prayed to the Above Ones, for success in his undertakings, and for long life and happiness for his family and tribe. The steam sweat over, they reached out for their clothes and blankets, wrapped on their blankets and went to the creek to bathe and dress.

Eagle Head woke up about daybreak the following morning, thinking of the ordeal ahead, which he was to undergo alone. The camp was along the St. Mary's River, east of lower St. Mary's Lake. About noon he brought in his horses, caught one for his mother, Mink Woman, and one for his sister, Fine Woman. The three of them rode off to Chief Mountain with Black Otter. On the west side a ridge goes gradually up the mountain. Right near the top it is steep. They tied their horses there and the woman folks climbed up, bringing two buffalo robes and a blanket for him to use; one robe to lie on, the other robe and blanket to cover up with. He had his gun for safe guard. Near sun down Black Otter prayed again to his secret helper, to the Sun and to the Night Light to protect Eagle Head in his sleep. Then he and the women left.

If a person fasting doesn't have a vision on the fourth night, he is done for. Some animal is afraid of him, afraid to be his sacred helper. He must leave the place and try again at a later date and in another place.

On the third night of his sleep, he saw a Cougar, a long-tailed one, come out of the timber and stop to look at him. He said to the Cougar, "You are powerful, always successful in your wanderings and kills. Help me. I am poor." But the Cougar went back into the timber.

As the fourth night came on, he prayed hard to the Above One's before his sleep. In his sleep vision the Cougar came out of the timber again and said to him, "You want me to be your sacred helper, but you must do certain sacrifices to the Above Ones. Then I will help you along."

The morning after that fourth night, the party of three came after him. Eagle Head was weak from thirst and hunger.

His mother brought him water so he took a little drink, not enough to hurt or upset himself. Half way down to camp he took another drink. Before they left the top of Chief Mountain, Black Otter asked him if he'd had any luck. Eagle Head told him of the vision, of a certain land animal who was to be his secret helper. They were all glad. When they arrived at camp he ate a light meal and later on, ate some more. The next day he rested and stayed in camp.

The second day Eagle Head and Wolf Tail, his friend, caught their saddle horses and rode up to Flat Top Mountain. They tied their horses at the botton slope and climbed the steep side. Half way up they jumped seven big horn sheep, killed two, gutted them and dragged them down to their horses. They quartered them up, rode home to camp and had big horn steaks for their evening meal.

Eagle Head's last battle with our enemies, the Gros Ventres (in Indian we call them Entrails or Big Bellies), took place at the south end of the divide Mountains (or Cypress Hills) in Canada, not far from the border, about sixty miles north of the present city of Havre. It was his last great encounter with the other chiefs and warriors in a royal battle with the enemy.

These Gros Ventres drifted in from Canada, from the northeast. An Assinniboine chief says of them, "One would think the Gros Ventres were the original people here, before any other tribe, to hear them talk." According to what I learned from my grandfather, they were renegades, always in trouble with other tribes, getting kicked out and chased from tribe to tribe. Finally the Assinniboines took pity on them and let them stay in their eastern country. Sometime in the 1700's they moved up into Pikuni country. One day the Gros Ventres' head chief came to our camp and met with our head chiefs, crying that the Assinniboine tribe was killing them off and was too large for them to fight. They had to flee. He said to our head chiefs, "Let us live near you, to roam with your in your great plains and mountains."

Our chiefs said to him, "Stay as long as you want. Hunt buffalo. Any wild game is yours to kill. If any other tribe raids your camps, we will help you in fighting them." That's how we became friends with the Entrails or Big Belly people.

Around 1861 the Pikuni friendship with the Gros Ventres ended. It was them who caused it. One late fall, it was almost winter, some Kalispells (Flatheads) came over the

Backbone, the Rockies, to raid our horse herds. We Pikuni were camped along Bear River, the Marias, not far from where it joins the Missouri. The Gros Ventres were camped nearby, below us. Our camps were west of them, a little farther up. The Flatheads knew that some Pikuni were camped for winter along the Bear River. Coming around south a ways from our camp, they missed us, found the camp of the Gros Ventres and took some of their horses.

Going back the way they came, they left some poor thin horses of their stolen ones behind and these drifted in among the Pikuni horses.

In the early frost the next morning, a few Gros Ventres followed the stolen horses' tracks and came to where they had joined ours. Just then they saw two young Pikuni men going after the horses and they killed them. The Gros Ventres went back to their camp and told their chief that the Pikuni camped west of them had stolen their horses.

Soon the Pikuni camp chief, Butterfly, told some other youths to follow the ones who had gone after the horses. They came back running and told Butterfly, "Some Gros Ventres killed our boys." They knew the killers because the Gros Ventres had visited around our camps quite a bit. Butterfly and his two sub-chiefs, Raining Bird and Owns Many Horses, went down to the Gros Ventre camp to tell their head chief, Sitting Woman, of the killings. A hundred or more warriors went with Butterfly. They came to the Entrails camp, told the chief what had happened and told them to leave at once and to go back down to the east country where they came from.

Butterfly told them, "We could kill you all but we pity you. Never come back to our country anymore."

A year or two after that, Eagle Head and Red Plume were the leaders of a war party on a raid to the Cut Throats (Sioux). They went along the south side of the Bear Paw Mountains, crossed Cow Creek, then went along the north side of the Little Rockies and discovered the Entrails big camp north of Hairy Cap, along Beaver Creek. That night they killed a number of Gros Ventres and took two hundred head of horses. From that time on, war parties of the Pikuni frequently raided the Entrails' camp. They, the Gros Ventres, came to raid a Pikuni camp once in a while but did little harm.

Around 1866 the head camp chief, Butterfly, died. Owns Many Horses took over as head chief of camp. The Gros Ventres still had Sitting Woman as their head chief. About

midsummer, when berries are ripe, Many Horses held a meeting with the medicine men and warriors and told them that the Pikuni should go up to the Divide Mountains, or Cypress Hills, in Canada to make the yearly offering, the medicine lodge to the Sun. Little did the people think that they would encounter their enemies, the Entrails people, up there at the Divide Mountains in Berry Ripe Moon, July.

They struck out for the border line and the mountains and got there the third day in the late evening. Their camp was along the Seven Persons Creek. It got its name from the time a party of Pikuni ran onto and killed seven Cree Indians there. The whites call it Maple Creek. A war party of Entrails people saw some Pikuni moving along and that evening, reported it to their chiefs.

Sitting Woman said, "The Pikuni go up to the Divide Mountains to make great offerings to the Sun and to put up their medicine lodge. So they come again now." He told his visitors, the Crow chiefs, Plenty Coups and Weasel Chief, "We will tackle them early in the morning. Not many will have come up for the offerings to the Sun. We will go there and kill them all. We will take our travois along and also some pack horses to load on all the good things the Pikuni own."

Early the next morning the Entrails people had a council and sent a few men ahead to check over the Pikuni camp. That morning nearly all the horses had been brought in to the creek to water. Near the Pikuni camp, a grove of cottonwoods was strung in a long row, north to south. The Entrails scouts came up to the camp from the south east, so all they could see was six teepees and a few horses. The main camp at the upper end had the grove screening it. The two scouts told Sitting Woman, "We will kill all of them in the six camps." He said, "Go back farther. There must be more camps back out of sight." By then some of the Pikuni at the first six camps had seen the war party coming. They told Owns Many Horses that a big bunch of enemies was coming on horseback. He told camp crier to burst out to all the warriors and tell them to get their horses ready for war. Many enemies were coming. Eagle Head caught his fast war horse, Yellow Bird, painted one long red stripe from between the ears down to the nose, one red stripe on each side from the withers down, and one from the rump down each side to the thighs. He also painted himself.

Around the warriors rode, to where the six teepees

stood, Owns Many Horses in the lead, Eagle Head next to him and about five hundred warriors back of them, charging at the enemy. In those days it was bows and arrows, the enemy was wearing war bonnets and shields. Too soon they were among them. Eagle Head had no time for shooting arrows. He used his stone war club right and left and his horse, Yellow Bird, jumped fast.

The Entrails all turned and ran, with the Pikuni knocking them off their horses. Enemy pack horses and travois horses ran in all directions, spilling their loads. There were a few guns but they only shot one-at-a-time with a ball and powder. They were no good for a battle, too slow to load. Not one enemy touched Eagle Head.

A Pikuni chief, Top Knot, got himself a fine-looking Gros Ventre woman to keep for his own. He overtook her, pulled her down from her horse and signed to her, "You will be my woman."

She made a sign to him, "Do not kill me. I will never leave you." She was beautiful, too, about thirty winters old.

Eagle Head claimed fifteen enemy scalps for himself.

So ended the great chasing of the enemy, and it was a sight, with their belongings lying everywhere. Women came from the Pikuni camp to pack up what ever they could, lodges, robes and clothing. After the battle they counted the enemy dead at over three hundred. It was a great victory day for the Pikuni, as told to me by Eagle Head.

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MORNING IN CAMP

Sun comes up in the east, smoke goes up into the blue sky from the smoke holes of the lodges. Everywhere women are busy, cooking for their lodgehold, their clan. Young ones are getting water and wood. Men come out of their lodges, going for the river with some children to plunge into it for their morning bath. Spring, summer and fall, it makes them tough and healthy and they can stand bitter cold while hunting on the bare prairie. After their bath and swim, they go back to their lodges for the first meal of the day. A dish of boiled meat is set before each man. The children are served too, meat and berry or choke cherry soup.

The young men who went out before day break bring in the horses. If the buffalo are not far out from the camps, each hunter catches his fast buffalo horse and they all start out together to make a run. The women folk catch their travois and pack horses and follow the hunters so they can help butcher and load up the meat to pack to camp.

Some women remain at camp, busy tanning hides, cutting meat to dry, sewing moccasins and performing many tasks on hand.

FIRST RIDER'S STORY

My name is First Rider. I was born sixty winters ago by the Judith River. Lone Chief, a tall handsome man and a great warrior, was my father. He had been on many raids by the time I was born. My mother, Bluebird Woman, was beautiful too. Even then, when I was born, she was a sacred woman who had built three medicine lodges to the sun. They both loved me. My mother sewed leather clothes for me to wear in summer and furs for winter.

When I was five winters old I envied older kids playing with bows and arrows, so I got my father to teach me how to make them. By the time I was seven winters old I could make good bows and arrows. My father gave me five horses, two geldings and three mares. The two geldings, both young horses, were broken to ride and pack. The mares were gentle too. So I learned to ride at an early age and loved to go out riding with the other boys. Some evenings I'd sit by the fires in the lodges listening to warriors and hunters tell of their undertakings and brave deeds. Then came my tenth winter. I was big for my age.

A war party was getting ready to go to the enemy. My father was going and wanted me to go along too, but my mother told him I was too young, that it would be dangerous for me, her little boy. Lone Chief told her he was my age when he first went on a war raid with his father.

That night the Sun gave him a vision in his sleep. He and his son were with the war party. They saw enemies and killed them. So my mother gave in and promised that she would pray to the Above Ones for us to survive the dangers that we encountered and return safely.

Father told her, "I will make a good warrior of our son."

Talks With The Buffalo, a great warrior in his young days, gave me the name First Rider when I was born. I liked that name. Father told me that in one war raid of long ago Talks With The Buffalo ran right through the enemy line, swung his war club and left, even killed some enemies with it and returned to his line of fighters without a mark on him. He, Talks With The Buffalo, gave me one of his cougar claws. The

Cougar was a sacred helped to him. He died of old age, but I am still around through good and bad.

I knew the path ahead would be rough for me and if I had luck I would kill many enemies and take many horses. As of then I could not go for a sleep vision for a sacred helper. I was too young yet for it. In the mean time I would try to learn all I could from the older ones.

Our camp was below the place where Bear River (the Marias) flows into the Missouri. My father had been chosen for the war party, and Big Moon too. We had plenty of good men; Owl Child, Painted Wing, Calf Tail, Shoots First, Fast Buffalo and many others, twenty five of us.

The day we were to start on our long journey we built a sweat lodge for two medicine pipe men, Red Eagle, the owner of the sacred thunder pipe, and Eagle Head. His was the elk pipe. They threw their blankets out of the lodge, the women pushed hot stones in and with his stick Eagle Head rolled them into the small pit dug in the center. Red Eagle started to sing, got his Buffalo tail, dipped it into the little bowl of water near him and sprayed the hot rocks. Steam filled the lodge. He started to pray to the Above Ones and also to his sacred helper for the success of our war raid to the enemy. Then Eagle Head prayed. We were outside, around the sweat lodge, helping pray with them. Toward the end he sang one of his many pipe songs, lit his pipe, took a whiff of smoke and blew it up toward the sky, for the Above Ones and the Sun. He passed the pipe out to us and we each took a few whiffs from it. I prayed to the Sun to help me take an enemy gun. The ceremony ended.

He told us, "I will pray each day while you are gone. The Sun be with you." They reached out for their wraps, went to the creek to wash and swim and went back to camp to put on their clothes. We got ready for our journey to the north east country.

One other young fellow, Gray Bull, who was two winters older than me, went along under his uncle Lone Wolf's care. I was not afraid anymore after I knew he was coming along. We started out that evening with four horses. The other young one and I rode horseback; the other two horses carried out belongings. When I got older I realized it was not good to take a horse along on a war raid. It was too risky. I learned it on that, my first trip.

All I had was my bow and arrows but I could shoot well at close range with them. Some of the older men had powder

and ball or one shot rifles. A few had many shots rifles. Traveling at night, looking for enemy camps was new to me. We would hear wolves howling, coyotes yelping. They were harmless, but when the first dim white light showed in the east I was glad morning was coming on. We would turn down a coulee into the cottonwoods and brush by a river to hide for the day.

The third night our party killed a buffalo cow. We quickly broiled some and ate all we could get inside of us. then cut all we could take along, cooked it and put it in our war sacks.

Our leaders told us. "We can't kill any more game. We are in enemy territory now, even in our own country." We were still west of the Bear Paws. That night our party had a council about whether to go east to the Parted Hairs, the Siouxs and Assiniboines, or to go north up around the Divide Mountains Cypress Swamp, the country of the Northern Crees and the Big Bellies (Gros Ventres). The men agreed among themselves to go north to the Divide Mountains.

We started again that night and landed the third morning on the east side of the lowest Sweet Grass Hill. We camped on Sage Creek, still in our country, about day break and hid in the brush. We were having one bad time with our four horses. We would look for deep coulees where the men could hide for the day but couldn't tie the horses in the brush. We used them all night and they had to eat grass during the day to keep strong. We took turns watching out for them with two man shifts. Even then I wondered why they'd taken those horses along. They were giving us trouble and besides, us kids could keep up with the men walking each night. I was tall for my ten winters' age, as big as the other boy, twelve winters old.

That evening we started out for the Canadian-U.S. border line, heading for Little River, (the Milk River), where it flows back into the United States, and then north east to the Divide Mountains. We were following a coulee when we saw a lone rider coming our way. We all hid down in the coulee until he came close enough and all fired at him. Down he went. We shot his horse down too and all ran toward him. I struck the dying man with my willow whip, so the men told me to scalp him.

'Ooh!' I thought, his face and mouth, shit it was

bloody! It nearly upset my stomach. Just then I didn't have the nerve to be near him.

Two men grabbed and held me, told me, "You'll never make a warrior if you don't scalp him. Make your choice." I was really shaking. I had to scalp him, even if I hated to do it. I accepted. Cut his braids and scalp off his head. I held his scalp up by the braids and really felt like a man. Looking at it, groaning and almost crying at first, I wrapped it up in a rag and kept it dear to me. I'd done it.

My father being the leader, the men gave him the dead one's gun and he in turn gave it to me. So I had a gun and my first head scalp too at ten winters of age. The powerful Sun was good to me. This one we'd killed was a Big Belly. The others of our party, hidden over the next coulee from us, had killed a rider too. He'd come up on them without knowing they were in the coulee.

My father told us, "These two are early hunters out to get meat and if they don't show up back at their camp, others of their kind will soon be out looking for them. We should look for a place to hide." We went on ahead into a well timbered coulee and put two lookouts watching, but saw none of the enemy. During the day we all took turns holding the rope for each horse to feed just outside of the brush. That day the lookouts were higher up. We had to keep an eye on them in case they saw enemies coming. Our party held a council again.

My father, Lone Chief, told us, "We have killed two Big Bellies. We should stay here during the night and tie our four horses out a little farther from the brush, where there is plenty of feed. We'll take turns, two at a time, watching out for the night and the horses. By morning we will know what to do. More enemies might come this way and we have a good concealment here. The horses should have a bellyful by morning. Besides, there is a spring down this coulee a little ways. We can water our horses near day break and bring them into the brush. Maybe we can get moving again by day break."

We lay down to sleep. My father and Heavy Runner lay on each side of a big rock. About midnight Lone Chief woke up and called Heavy Runner. He'd had a vision in his sleep, his secret helper nudging him, saying, "Your enemy's camp is not far from here. Be alert and cautious and you'll have good luck."

"A real helper you have." Heavy Runner told him.

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When the Seven Persons, the seven stars that form a water dipper, pointed east, meaning that day was not far off, we got together, went north and got in close under the Divide Mountains. My father sent two men up to the ridge ahead of us to look out for enemies.

One man stayed there; the other came running down and told us, "Four men are coming this way. They have only one horse." One of the men started singing the war song. The lookout signaled that another enemy was coming too, alone. Buffalo Child, up on the west end of the ridge, saw the four men with one horse going toward the next coulee. He waved for us to hurry up to him. Some of our party waited for the one man coming from the other direction.

Buffalo Child said to us, "We can beat them to the coulee!" We ran at full speed and got there ahead of them. When they were close enough we shot them all down. Our other party got the lone one too, but he fired once and got Berry Child before he died. We had killed seven enemies so far. Some of our men had many shot rifles they had gotten a year before, from the trader at Fort Benton. They were new to us and most other tribes did not yet have them.

We started for the north rim of Divide Mountain and the valley below it. Close to the rim we hit jack pines along the ridge. Seven enemies jumped us from another ridge with pines to the west of us. We all dropped to the ground.

Our leader said, "Lie low and shoot straight." All the enemy had was old north trader muzzle loaders. Some had bows and arrows. They were poor weapons compared to our many shots rifles. We killed them all. That made fourteen enemies killed. We took scalps but no guns, as my father said to the men, "The guns are not worth taking." They were poorly clothed, too. Our party went over to the rim and looked down into a broad space near the brush and timber where a big Cree and Gros Ventre camp was pitched north of the river.

My father said, "The camp is too large, too many Crees and Gros Ventres down there with plenty of brush along the river to hide in. We cannot attack them. They would kill us all and take the real guns, our many shots rifles." So we started for home. This was our cousins the Kainai's (Bloods) and Siksika's (North Blackfoot) country and these Crees and Gros Ventres had no business here. They belonged north of the Saskatchewan River.

Many Tail Feathers wanted to shoot up the Liar's camp

from the rim top but the others said, "No, we would only be asking for trouble, like shooting into a hornet's nest. They would surround us east and west and make short work of us."

We started for the Grandmother's line, crossed it and traveled back to the lower Sweet Grass Hills, where we would camp in our country.

The next evening five of us went up into the timber, startled a bunch of deer and killed six of them. Others of our party came to look for us when they heard shooting and helped with the skinning and packing. We divided it, cooked some and put the rest in our war bags. Later in the dusk we started south east toward the Bear Paws.

Three mornings later we reached the Bear Paws, picketed our horses in the little open parks and went up into thick timber to sleep.

Today we have psychics who make predictions, Jeanne Dixon and others. My father and Heavy Runner had powers and slept a little ways off from the others. Heavy Runner was a holy medicine man; in his sleep he foresaw things, with the aid of his secret helper, the Cougar. This time in his sleep he saw a big Sioux camp where the Musselshell flows into Big River. The Sioux were getting ready to move. He could see them plainly, vision people moving around packing up, and bunches of horses ready to be driven when the move was on.

When Heavy Runner woke up he told my father of his sleep vision.

Lone Chief told him, "We will have to travel home and have a council with our people. We could move camp to Cow Creek, between here and the Little Rockies, then go on horseback to check the Big River along its course, clear down to where Milk River flows into it. If the Parted Hairs are still in our country we will make them move. If they don't want to move we will have to do them a battle. We don't want them up in our country, killing off our game. Earth Maker put wild game here and there so that all the people would have plenty in their own country."

We got home to our big camp the second morning. My mother cried, she was so glad to see me home in good shape. Our leaders told the camp chief, Big Lake, of Heavy Runner's vision and of our plan to move to Cow Creek. They agreed. The camp crier, Charge Across, a big man who bellowed out like a buffalo bull, announced that the camp would move in the morning.

When we got to Cow Creek two afternoons later, Charge Across bellowed out that all warriors should catch their best horses early in the morning. We would ride along the north rim of the Big Missouri River and if the enemy was still in our territory we would make them move or give them a battle.

Two hundred warriors went out the next morning. We searched in two groups way down to where the Mussellshell flows into Big River and only turned back when we were sure the enemy was not around. It was now past Leaves Falling Moon. There were still berries to pick. We moved up to the Milk River to hunt and get ready for winter.

The next winter, Lone Chief was killed. He and Heavy Runner were leading a war party that ran into some enemies in the brush. They charged one another and no one could see. Some of our warriors claimed that Owl Child shot Lone Chief by mistake. The leaders brought my father and his rifle back home to our camp.

I asked my mother if it would be all right for me to take his many shots rifle.

She said, "No, Your father took his gun to heart as a great life saver. I want it to stay with him. Kill a few more buffalo and you can buy yourself a new many shots rifle."

So I kept going out with my powder and ball, killing buffalo when I could. In May we took the robes to Fort Benton. Spotted Cap, Charles Conrad the trader, pitied me. I had to hunt for my mother, my two almost-mothers and two sisters. They had no one to care for them. I was eleven winters old. We traded ten well tannned robes for a many shots rifle and four boxes of ammunition. My mothers and sisters traded the rest of the robes for whatever they needed in cloth, blankets and goods.

That spring Heavy Runner was made our new camp chief. We spent part of the summer camped south of Heart Butte Mountain, then moved down along Bear River, the Marias. In Early Fall Moon we moved again and camped above Mountain Chief's band, lower down the Marias.

That winter, the winter of 1870, Owl Child got into an argument with a white man named Four Bears, or Malcom Clark, who was married to a full blood Pikuni woman and Clark beat him up. Owl Child made up his mind he was going to Wolf Creek to Clark's place. Owl Child and a few of his friends went up there and killed him. Four Bears Clark being a former

soldier, the U.S. Army decided to take revenge for him.

One morning in Mid Winter Moon, January, most of the hunters went a long ways out toward the Sweet Grass Hills for a buffalo chase real early in the morning. A little later I was out looking for my horses, thinking I would follow the hunters out. General Baker (Eskeeta) and his men came looking for Mountain Chief's camp, where Owl Child stayed. They siezed me and held me till they got near our camp. They didn't care that it was not Mountain Chief's camp. The soldiers shot up the big camp, killing most of the women, kids and old men. Then they tore down lodges and set fire to the camp. I saw my own lodge half burned down. My mothers and sisters were all killed by the shooting.

After the soldiers let me go I never went near to check. I felt so low and down hearted, I cried.

When they returned, the hunters and the old men, women and children who'd escaped joined Mountain Chief's camp. Later, people called it the Baker Massacre.

That's First Rider's story, as he told it to my father, Comes At Night.

IRON PIPE'S MEDICINE

It was early in spring, mid-May, when Thunder came back to our north country, just as the birds come back. In late fall, when leaves turn yellow and drop off, he drifts south like the birds and geese. Now he was thundering, rolling, rumbling in the clouds high above us. He was home. Iron Pipe was the medicine man, the owner of the thunder pipe and blue lodge. The sacred blue thunder lodge had a yellow bird painted on the back about two feet above the ground that would flicker streaks of lightening off and on. During a rain storm it could be seen from far off on the dark night plain. It was a very holy lodge. Iron Pipe set it up now for the annual sacred ceremony.

The thunder pipe was given to him in his night sleep on a cliff ledge near the Missouri River. Thunder told him he would be his secret helper and gave Iron Pipe a feather and bone whistle, along with red and yellow clay paint. When it rained and stormed, Iron Pipe would pray to thunder to not kill or hurt any of his people.

Now he brought the holy pipe bundle and his followers and helpers came to be with him in the lodge. To start the ceremony, Iron Pipe unwrapped the bundle, took the pipe from it and held it aloft to Thunder. It was richly hung with ermine skins, scalps and eagle feathers and stitched with porcupine quill work. A little fire burned in the center of the lodge. Iron Pipe started praying, raked a few hot coals out from the fire and spread them with sweet pine needles. Then he started a song. The others helped him sing, pounding their drums on a slow beat. After two songs, they stopped. He prayed again to Thunder and the Above Ones. They sang again, men and women all helping out, then stopped again. Iron Pipe lit the pipe, took a whiff of smoke, blew it toward the sky. Took more puffs, then passed the pipe down the line. He cleaned the bowl, laid it on a flat round stone and proceeded with more songs. Thunder handed down about a hundred songs for this rite. It took all afternoon.

By evening, when it was over, the women had prepared a big feed, a feast. All ate, filed out and went down to their lodges.

Our camp was on Bear Creek (the Marias River) in the time when green grass was coming up. Heavy Runner was camp chief, with Wolf Chief and Long Horn as his sub-chiefs. Plenty of game was all around us.

Iron Pipe was also a good Indian doctor and had two powerful roots for bone mending and inside pains. He kept sweet grass and sweet pine on hand all the time. One day about noon, Eagle Plume and his wife, Little Otter, brought their son, Bear Shoe, holding him by each arm, to Iron Pipe's lodge.

The young man was really in pain, so Iron Pipe asked Eagle Plume, "What is wrong with your son? What happened to him?"

The parents told him, "He was riding, chasing some horses to head them off and his horse stepped in a badger hole and rolled. He broke some ribs on the left side. Can you doctor our son?"

Iron Pipe said, "Yes, I will." He told his wife, "There are some rocks outside. Put one in the fire and get it hot." He also told his wife to got out and get his brother, Comes At Night, and his friend, Bear Head, to come over with their drums to sing for him while he doctored. They came.

Iron Pipe told his wife to take a stick and push the hot rock onto a flat iron pan. He got his medicine bag, sat near Bear Shoe, untied his bag and took out some of a root he had mashed fine to rub on the broken bones. The pan with the red hot stone sat near him. He rolled a cloth scarf, tied it around his head and started on a song. The two drummers helped him, helped sing his doctoring song, slow, twice, and the third time they beat their drums a little faster. He waved a little back and forth toward the young man, picked up some of the fine pounded root from a sacket, spread it over the ribs with his moist hand and rubbed it in lightly. He licked the red hot stone with his tongue, held his head up and blue flame shot out of his mouth. Iron Pipe stooped over the young man and blew easy with the blue flame over his broken ribs. He asked the young man if it burned.

Bear Shoe said, "No, it feels good."

He did that three times. His brother and friend were singing hard for him and Iron Pipe would hum along now and then. Each time he'd rub the mashed root on with his moist hand, he'd come with the blue flame. First he's lick the hot rock, then the blue flame would come flickering out of his

mouth. He asked the young one if it burned.

Bear Shoe said, "No, but I could feel it warm over my ribs each time you blew around them."

Iron Pipe picked up some sweet pine needles and spread them over the hot stone, spread his hand over it to catch the scent on the palm, held it up to the young man and told him to inhale it.

After the third time he told the singers, "Kinniyai" (That's all.) Iron Pipe asked his brother and friend to come back late in the evening. He was going to doctor the young man once more. He told the family, the three of them, to stay overnight, and early in the morning he would pray to the Above Ones for Bear Shoe. He would be all right, but should not act fresh for a few days.

This young warrior had some real nice horses, three fast young buffalo horses, one gray, one sorrel and one bay.

He told his father and mother, "I will give Iron Pipe the gray. He's a good war horse, about five winters old. He is the fastest of the three horses."

The old lady cooked boiled tongue, dorsel ribs, stewed berries and bannack bread by the open fire for supper that night. All had a feast. The young man was feeling good by now. He had hardly any pain and he ate, but not much.

In the late evening Iron Pipe's brother, Comes At Night, and his friend, Bear Head, came back. Once more they went through the same proceedure.

Bear Shoe slept well all night. He had no pain the next morning after breakfast, after Iron Pipe got through praying for him to the Above Ones. Bear Shoe and his parents left for their camp. Iron Pipe gave the young man's father some of the mashed root good for bones. He told him to use it on the young man's ribs morning, noon and evening, to wet it and rub it in. The young man was all right in seven days.

He, Iron Pipe, was a great Indian doctor, a bone mender, through the root he used. There were medicine women, too. Some women were given sleep visions of certain plants with leaves that were good for certain diseases when they were boiled. According to the Crees of Rocky Boy's Reservation, the great Cree medicine man, Natoose, who died in 1923, performed what we call miracles and specialized in mending bones. Iron Pipe, the Pikuni, was the blue flame healer. The Devil was not behind it, only his sacred helper, the Thunderbird.

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In those days there was no Devil around. Columbus and the missionaries brought the Devil over from Europe. No Catholic priest moved with the Pikuni during most of their time of roaming. St. Peter's Mission was built in 1859 on the Teton River, but the Pikuni had not much interest in being with the priests at that time. Later Father Prando tried to teach the Pikuni the white man's religion. He told them to follow his teaching, to lead pure lives and when they died their souls, or shadows, would go up into the sky to heaven to join World Maker, God.

He told them, "If you fail to live well, your shadows will go to the Fire Maker below, the Devil, to keep and you will burn forever."

Red Paint told him, "Black Robe, your kind will go to World Maker when they die, but we Indians have no wings. We cannot fly into the sky. When we die our shadows walk out to the Sand Hills, to remain there forever and have plenty to eat."

THE LAST ADVENTURE OF WHITE QUIVER

This is White Quiver's last and greatest adventure, as he often told it to his old time friends. White Quiver was born about 1850 and died here on our reservation in the Month of the Falling Leaves in 1931. In his early youth he was a pest and a thorn in the side of the Crow nation. They called him the big negro. He was about six feet two and one hundred seventy pounds.

In those days the Indians told their age by the winters, so White Quiver was about fifteen winters old when he decided that it was time for him to endure a sacred fast. He wanted to be a real man, a warrior, and to join some society like the Raven Carriers or Seizers, who are good singers and dancers. White Quiver used to watch war parties coming home, waving scalps, riding horseback and driving before them the horses they had taken from the enemy. He had never thought much about them, but now, being fifteen winters old, he made up his mind that it was time to make a fast and not fool around anymore. He told his father, Charge Across, and his mother, Eagle Woman, of his coming plans. White Quiver chose Pyramid Mountain, which stands on the south side of Big Badger River Canyon, as his place to fast.

His mother said to him, "Why not get Eagle Bear, owner of the sacred beaver medicine bundle and pipe?" He told her, "I will get him."

The next morning his father, who was a real warrior in his younger days, told him, "Run our horses in and I'll give Eagle Bear one of my top saddle horses." White Quiver brought the horses in and his father caught one gray gelding, five winters old, a really fast buffalo chaser that had helped him kill many a buffalo. Charge Across told his son, "Take this horse and give him to Eagle Bear. Tell him that you want his help to pray for you in your coming fast on Pyramid Mountain."

So he took the horse over to Eagle Bear and told him, "Oh powerful, Sun-favored sacred beaver bundle man, I am to undergo a fast. Help me, pray for me. This is your horse."

The old man told him, "Yes. Build me a sweat lodge at once and I will join you in it."

White Quiver went back to his father and asked him to help build a sweat lodge. In the center they dug a small pit and near by it, built a fire, where stones were set to heat. When the lodge was built and the stones were ready, they told the old man and on came Eagle Bear with his sacred beaver bundle and pipe. A wooden bowl of water was on hand and also a buffalo tail. Eagle Bear and White Quiver went into the little lodge, undressed, pushed their clothing out and sat naked. His mother, Eagle Women, and her neice, Fisher Woman, passed in the hot rocks with sticks and White Quiver rolled them into the pit. The old man dipped the buffalo tail in water and sprinkled the rocks. Plenty of steam soon filled the lodge. Eagle Bear sang one of his sacred beaver bundle songs and prayed to the Sun to protect and help White Quiver, to give him success in his lone fast. He sprinkled the rocks again and made more prayers to the Sun, the Night Light (moon) and the Seven Persons, (the dipper). A crowd of men and women were sitting close around the little lodge, listening to it all, to the prayers and songs well done. Eagle Bear and White Quiver finished and reached out for their blankets and clothes. Each wrapped himself around with his blanket, walked to the creek, took a swim and wash, dried himself and put on his clothes.

The next morning White Quiver, his father, Charge Across, and Eagle Bear set out for Pyramid Mountain. The big Indian camp was not far out from Big Badger River Canyon. They came up on the west side of the mountain and rode up nearly to the top. They tied their horses to some jack pines part ways down a steep slope. From there, they carried his two robes and one blanket to the top for him to sleep on, while he packed his gun up to keep near him in his fast, for safe guard. They stayed with him till after sundown and then left him on his own, telling him they would be back on the fifth morning and for him to be alert at all times. White Quiver prayed to the Above Ones. He also prayed to Earth Maker, "If I succeed in my sleep to find a sacred helper, I will cut a piece of liver from every wild game animal that I kill for you to eat."

This fasting is a tough ordeal, no water or food for four days and four nights. White Quiver's father had taught him a good luck song and told him to pray often while on his fast. The third night an Otter came to shore and told him, "I'll be back." The fourth night of his sleep he was lying along a bank with brush just back a ways from him. He was lying with his face to the creek when an Otter came wading out and walked

up to him. White Quiver asked the Otter to have pity and help him, to be his secret helper for success in his undertakings.

The Otter said to him, "From afar I heard your need for help." The animal told White Quiver what he should do, what sacrifice to make to call for aid when he was in need.

In the morning, Eagle Bear and Charge Across came, bringing water and food. White Quiver was getting weak from hunger but it was water he needed badly. His father told him, "Just take a little drink, not to upset you and when we get down to the bottom you can drink some more." They asked him if he'd had luck. White Quiver told him, "Yes, a water animal came, the one who has a lot of courage. He lives in water and on land." They went down the mountain and along the river and got home to camp that afternoon.

After that, White Quiver was in many skirmishes and was always successful, a real medicine man. Bullets and arrows could not penetrate him in battle. He was something like Chief Joseph, the Nez Pierce, who made his last stand against General Miles and O.O. Howard in the Bear Paws, in 1877. Chief Joseph commented on that battle, "I thought of my wife and children, who were now surrounded by soldiers and I resolved to go to them or die. With a prayer in my mouth to the great spirit Chief who rules above. I dashed unarmed through the line of soldiers. It seemed to me that there were guns on every side, before and behind me. My clothes were cut to pieces and my horse was wounded, but I was unhurt. As I reached the door of my lodge, my wife handed me my rifle, saying: "Here's your gun. Fight!"[2] Finally he gave up and surrendered to Miles and Howard. His famous words were, "From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever."[4] White Quiver, the Blackfeet warrior, stopped making raids after this adventure.

White Quiver's sacred helper, the Otter, appeared and talked to him in his vision long ago. He said, "If you want to succeed in your undertakings, to survive the arrows, lances and bullets of your enemies, you should always go alone against them."

This is his last adventure, as he often told it to old friends and young ones in his old age.

Editor's Note: This story takes place one year after the Starvation Winter of 1883-84, when hundreds of Pikuni died of hunger and a few years after the disappearance of the buffalo herds.

In the early fall of 1885, a war party of Crows came one night and raided our horses. They got forty head. We were camped on Badger Creek, not far from our Agency, which was below us. A year before, our Agent had gotten rules and regulations from Washington. Our Grandfather, the President, told his charges, his children, not to go on any more horse raids to other tribes. The same was told to the other tribes. I'd lose some fine horses in that raid, too. I got mad and said, "I don't care what our Grandfather said about raids. He cannot let those Crows get away with our horses and us not be able to do anything about what has happened to us. Granfather took our land away from us, all the east part of Montana territory north of the Mussellshell River to the Canadian line, and pushed us onto this reservation. That was all our land. I am going to pay back the Crows and raid them once more."

Some Pikuni warriors wanted to go with me. I told them, "I cannot accept your company. My sacred helper forbade me to take any one along if I am to succeed."

We found out it was the Crows from Running Wolf, my close friend, who found a coup stick set upright in the ground behind his camp. Tied to it was a deer leather with a Blackbird painted on it. I made up my mind to go that evening and told my wife to put two or three pairs of moccasins, a little sack of paint and some pemmican in my war sack. My friends helped build a sweat lodge.

So again I got Eagle Bear, owner of the beaver medicine bundle and pipe. He was a powerful sacred man. He went into the little lodge. He had brought his sacred pipe and offered prayers to the Above Ones. Water was in a little bowl by him, he dipped the buffalo tail in it and sprayed water on the rocks. Steam filled the lodge. We smoked and sang songs for my success to come on my long journey to the Crow nation. Once more, well finished, we reached out for our blankets, went to the creek to swim and went home to put on our clothes.

My friend, Running Wolf, offered me his fast horse to ride. I told him that riding a horse on a raid was too dangerous. Even a horse well hidden in timber during the day might be discovered by enemies, who would look for its rider. Going on foot to enemy territory was better. I started that evening.

Just about daybreak I went down to hide in some brush along Osaks Itutai (Back Fat, Dupuyer Creek) to sleep. I woke up in late evening, started out again at dusk and traveled all

the way down the south side of Bear Creek (the Marias River). Four mornings later, I came to where it flows into Big River (the Missouri). Just then some deer came to the water to drink, so I killed a yearling, cut all the meat off, made a fire and roasted it. I ate some and put the rest in my war sack. I knew it would be twelve or fourteen days before I could get back to my country. There was still some pemmican, too, in my sack.

Late that evening I built a small raft, took my clothes off and put the gun and war sack on the raft to keep. I tied a short rope to the raft and around my belly and started swimming, pulling it along. The Missouri was deep in places and I got across all right. In two nights I got to Yellow River (the Judith. I slept there that day and at late dusk, started out again and arrived two mornings later at Armell's Creek, near Black Mountain. I climbed it to rest and sleep.

I was really sad, thinking, 'Just four winters back, we Pikuni camped here. How happy we all were. There were plenty of buffalo then. Lots of meat and hides we could sell to the trader, Joseph Kipp. Then Grandfather sent his white soldiers to push us back on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, which was marked out for us. Our Chiefs told the soldiers, "This is our country. Thirty winters back we had a treaty with our Grandfathers, Stevens' Treaty, that took place where the Yellow River (Judith) joins Big River (the Missouri), in 1855. At that meeting our chiefs and Grandfather's men put it into writing that from the Musselshell River to the Missouri, as far along it as the North Dakota line, along it to Chief Mountain, down along the Backbone of the Big Rockies to Hellgate Pass and from there over to the Musselshell again, all that was to be Blackfeet Country." But the soldier chief said we were wrong, that some years back our head chiefs had turned a lot of that country back to our Grandfather, everything south of Big River (the Missouri), Bear Creek (the Marias) and Birch Creek. All that our chiefs had turned over to the President. So we had to move back to the reservation marked out for us. Hiya kimmatapsi Pikuni means poor Piegan. It was four winters ago that they told us to move.'

Editor's Note: Most of that land was taken by Executive Order of the President, without the participation of the Pikuni.

I started out again at dusk, arrived at the Mussellshell River the second night, got down to Elk River (the

Yellowstone) at daybreak and hid in the brush. That night I could see my goal, the big Crow camp in a wide opening along Elk River. Plenty of cotton trees and brush grew along the west side of the big camp, plenty of cherry bushes too. So I made it close to their camp. That night there was plenty of noise going on and plenty of fire light at the lodges, but around midnight all fires went out. All quiet. Seven Persons pointed eastward. Not long after, I was praying to the Above Ones for help.

I got up and walked toward the camp, moving slow. When I got close, I saw one horse standing near a teepee on the west side. I went up to him slowly, cut the short picket rope and led him away trying not to make noise. I got to the edge of the timber, tied him there and went back for another one. Luck was with me. I got two more and said to myself, 'Why not get another one to make four, as this is to be my last raid to enemy country.' So I said to myself, 'All right, I'll get one more.' Back I went and got one more, a good tall fast stallion I called Sicopi. He was black and white spotted, a dandy all-around horse. The others were good too and the ropes they were tied with came in handy. I roped and bridled him, got on him, led the other three and started out for home. After I got out a ways onto the plains, I turned the other three loose and drove them. One yellow mare, one brown gelding and one gray horse with a short tail. The fourth night I got home to Pikuni country.

My wife and cousins were glad to see me back. Then bad luck came up. The Crow Agent wrote to our Agent here and told him four Crow horses had been stolen. He asked our Agent to hold them if they'd been taken by a Pikuni and he would send for them. My cousin, Little Dog, told me, "The Indian police here are waiting for you to take over whatever you bring home. Why not go north now, to our cousins, the Kainai (Bloods), to trade these horses you've brought? Go now, for your safety." I started out for Canada that morning and was glad when I made it over the line.

That evening I got to Fort MacLeod. Bullhead MacLeod was their Agent, with his Red Coats. One of the little houses belonged to his good friend, Jerry Potts, a half-breed who was interpreter for MacLeod. I came up to Potts' house, got off, tied my horses and went in.

Potts' mother, Berry Woman (Minaki), was glad to see me. She was a Pikuni woman. She set food before me. After I'd rested up and smoked my pipe, I told Berry Woman, "I'm

going out to picket my horses for the night." When I got outside, my horses were gone. I was standing there wondering how they could have disappeared, who could have stolen them, when Bear Cub (Kaiyo-Kos), Jerry Potts, came along.

"White Quiver," he called me, "I'm sure surprised to see you here. Did you tie your horses there?"

I said, "Yes, and they've been stolen."

"No, White Quiver. You made a raid on the Crows and got four horses. Their Agent wired up here to look out for those horses, in case the Kainai got them. The Red Coats took them, to keep them here till the Crow Agent sends someone up here after them."

I told Potts, "The Red Coats! What right do they have to sieze my takings from an enemy. You interpret for me; let's go see Agent MacLeod."

He hugged me and told me, "Not now. Bullhead is going to have a party at his house. In the morning, after he eats, we'll go see him." The Queen Mother had nothing to do with what we Pikuni did in the Big Knives country. I thought that Agent should let me have my horses. They were takings from the Crows because they had raided us a month before and gotten forty head from the Pikuni.

The next morning we went over to Bullhead's office. I told him why I'd come. He shook hands with me with a big smile. I told Kaiyo-Kos, Jerry Potts, of why I raided the Crows, because they had taken forty head of our horses not long before and of how our Agent did not seem to give a damn about our loss. And the Crow Agent had sent out for help for only four head of horses, compared to our forty head. I told Potts, "You tell him all that and also tell him I want my horses back."

After Potts had told MacLeod, in English, of what I had said, MacLeod told Potts, "You tell White Quiver that if I had my own way I'd let him have the horses right now. I am only working for my living. I have a family and I am put in charge here. My boss is the big chief of the Red Coats, and I cannot step over his rule and do as I please about holding your horses. Don't blame me. I got a wire from the Crow Agent that four Crow horses were taken and the colors your horses show are the ones taken. I got his message five days ago, to hold them until he could send someone for them. "Well, "he said to me, "What's what?"

Oh, I felt sad, after going that far and losing the horses

that I had a right to claim because of the Crow raid on us. They'd taken six head of my own good horses. I was disappointed and felt sick in my stomach. He looked at me and pitied me and said, "White Quiver, I have a sad feeling for you, too, but I just cannot help you."

My horses were in with the Red Coat's Horses in a big quarter-mile square fence of long poles on the south side of the fort, in front of the Red Coat houses.

I told Potts, "Let's go." After we got to his house, I told him, "I have a plan. I'll get my horses back tonight, but I don't want you around. You tell him you'd like to go see the Aapatohis Pikuni, at Brocket to see how they're making out. There's no chance those Red Coats will watch all night. I'll surprise him."

We went back to Bullhead's office. I told him I wanted my horses back. Bullhead laughed. "White Quiver, what a joker you are." We left him. Potts got a release from him to go check the Aapatohis Pikuni (North Piegans) and sleep there.

He left the fort.

I told Berry Woman my plans. She said, "It's dangerous, Red Coats might kill you, but I'll help you." She gave me ropes and a robe.

Night came really cold, with snow ankle deep. The Red Coats guarding the fence walked along each side now and then. There was a slope into a little coulee down on the end. One of the guards built a fire down there and they took turns going to warm up. Soon both were at the fire. I was not far off, watching them. I lowered the poles of the gate in the center of one side, caught Sicopi,and the other three followed us out through the gate. All the Red Coats' horses came running out too and scattered. I got on Sicopi, with the other three right behind, made it over the Canadian line and got home to Badger Creek that afternoon. No, the police did not care to seize the horses, because the Crows had gotten away with forty head.

I'm tired little one, you know?

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GEORGE COMES AT NIGHT

My name is George Comes At Night. I would like to tell you of my father, Comes At Night's background. He was born along the Marias River, the one the Indians call Bear Creek, in 1855, the same year the Stevens Treaty took place between the Blackfeet, Sioux, Crow and Cheyenne tribes and the U.S. government. That was the first treaty made with the Blackfeet.

In his young days the prairie country was still wild. My father's two half-sisters taught him the English language. Their father was a white man but they had the same full-blood mother as my father, who was a full-blood Blackfeet. My father was glad to know the English language along with his Blackfeet language. Because he knew it, things like the English names for days, weeks, months and years came easy for him. He knew all the great warriors of his day.

As a young boy I would sit near my father and listen when he told a war story to some visitor from his own time and again I would hear him tell the same stories to others. It was very interesting to me. I was eleven years old when he died in 1920. He went to the Sand Hills then. I think of those stories often, the ones he told to visitors and friends before he died. I was old enough then to have them planted in my mind when I grew older.

My mother was Double Charge, one of the daughters of Eagle Head, a powerful medicine man of early days. I was born on December 15, 1909, near Big Badger Creek in a log cabin. I started school in 1918, and attended three schools; Old Agency, a government day school; the Blackfeet Boarding School on Cutbank Creek and the Holy Family Mission. I finished the eighth grade at Holy Family Mission and quit school in 1928. In those days most young full-bloods of my age didn't care to finish school. Just a few full-bloods went to high school at that time.

I got married in 1932 and went to ranching. Those were tough times, there was hardly any work of any kind and wages were about $2 a day, so most of us around my age tried to go into ranching. But we couldn't get a big stock loan then to forge us ahead and make a nice go of it. So I worked as a carpenter and log-setter off and on.

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By 1941 we got into World War II. Wages popped up to $1 an hour. Before World Warr II, carpenters used to get $6 for eights hours work. Today you can't hire one for less than $7 an hour.

Between 1946 and 1950 we were making good with the ranch. We had four hundred head of sheep. But then one fall there was a heavy raining season. Our sheep corral was all mud, so we herded them out to an open park near the river. Dogs jumped the sheep that night and forced them near a high bank. One hundred seventy five head of sheep got pushed from behind by the others, over the bank into the high, dirty water and drowned. That really upset us. We sold the other two hundred twenty five head to get out clear and bought some cattle, but we never made enough to increase them. We had a nice house there, a barn, sheds, a corral, some horses.

By 1958 I started getting sick. Then in 1961 I lost my hearing in an accident on a ranch where I was working, near Spokane. I sold my place to a niece and built a house here in Heart Butte.

I'm a great reader of all kinds of stories, thousands of books, and I've done a lot of writing. I'm like Lincoln, I've learned from books I've picked up here and there. The old time stories I heard from my father, my grandfather and even my mother, are often in my mind.

EDITOR'S NOTES

George Comes At Night says that he has written these old-time stories as they were told to him, as nearly as he can remember. The main characters and events are true, but he has fictionalized the names of many minor characters.

Some of the incidents, for instance the saving of Mik-ka-pi by his sacred helper, the Grizzly Bear, are visionary, and are true to that kind of experience. Whether a person who has not experiencing in that sacred way could have seen the Bear and his helping actions is an open question. The answer may be no, but that would not make the incident less true. The sacred experience was spiritually true and visually real to Mik-ka-pi and resulted in physical healing and power which enabled him to reach home against overwhelming odds. The visions and magical experiences of other characters are equally real and influential in their lives and in life of their tribe. These incidents involve a strong belief in the power and the acceptabless of visions. That belief is very foreign to the dominate culture of the United States, which still tends to see visions as evidence of madness. These are stories of another time, dominated by a different set of beliefs. Visionary and magical experiences in these stories affect not only the people who are directly involved, as Heavy Runner is in "First Rider's Story," they also affect the entire band, which moves down-river in the story, to search for the Sioux camp of Heavy Runner's vision. If the Sioux are not there, they have already moved and that is no reflection on Heavy Runner or the power of his vision. No one seems surprised or disappointed.

Having grown up in a society in which magic has been reduced to party entertainment and school assemblies and is identified with cheap trickery, most of us are ill equipped to judge the truth or the power of the visionary experiences which successfully guided tribal people and societies for thousands of years before those societies encountered the conflicting view of the world held by the conquering European-based cultures.

The stories in ROAMING DAYS were written between November, 1977, when Cynthia Kipp first talked with George

about doing stories for the Blackfeet Heritage Program, and February, 1978. Since he does not hear well, George did not care for the tape recorder and preferred to write his stories. He already had considerable experience, both as a prolific writer of letters and as a writer of stories for his family and acquaintances.

In editing these stories I have added nothing of my own, no new images or incidents, and have preserved George's language very closely. His style of writing the English language shows the influence of French, the language of the early traders in Pikuni country. That French influence is typical of the Pikuni dialect of English, especially among older Blackfeet speakers, for example: "He, Talks With The Buffalo, gave me one of his cougar claws." (from "First Rider's Story") In French one may use the pronoun, "He," and the person's name, "Talks With The Buffalo," together, for emphasis. George's choice of words also shows the influence of the Blackfeet language, for instance, his tendency to use the word "told" to mean either "told" or "asked," as in, "He also told his wife to go out and get his brother . . ." (from "Iron Pipe's Medicine"). This does not necessarily mean that Iron Pipe is a dominating husband. In the Blackfeet language the same verb, Nitanik, can mean either "he asked" or "he told," depending on its context. George's style is individual and very much his own, but also reflects the history and culture of his people.

Jane Bailey
Browning, Montana
March, 1978

NOTES

1. Sits-beside-him-wife. During their roaming days the Pikuni, like most plains Indian tribes, were polygamous. This was due in part to the high death rate among the warriors, which left a larger number of women than men. His sits-beside-him-wife was the man's first wife. Often she was the oldest of two or more sisters or women closely related to each other who were his wives.

2. Pikuni. The Blackfeet laguage name for one of the three main tribes of Blackfeet speaking people. These tribes were all part of one loosely-knit group in the distant past. Pikuni translates Piegan. One popular story says that it means poor robes, though no one is sure of its origin. George uses Pikuni for the South Piegan, the tribe known to most of the non-Indian world as the Blackfeet of Montana. It is the southermost group of Pikuni. The Aapotahsi Pikuni (North Piegan), the Kainai (Bloods) and the Siksika (North Blackfoot) tribes now have reserves in Alberta, Canada, near the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana. The Blackfeet people refer to themselves in their own language as the Pikuni.

3. W. C. Vanderwerth, ed. INDIAN ORATORY, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971, p. 177.

4. Ibid., p. 130.